

# Sing Down The Moon



By

Scott O'Dell

A Novel Study  
by Nat Reed

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**About the author:** Nat Reed was a member of the teaching profession for more than 35 years. He was a full-time instructor at Trent University in the Teacher Education Program for nine years. For more information on his work and literature, visit [novelstudies.org](http://novelstudies.org).

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## Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on two or three chapters of *Sing Down the Moon* and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

1. Before You Read
2. Vocabulary Building
3. Comprehension Questions
4. Language and Extension Activities

A **portfolio cover** (p.7) as well as a **Checklist** (p.6) are included so that students may track of their completed work.

**Every activity need not be completed by all students.**

### Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities included in this curriculum unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

**Themes** which may be taught in conjunction with the novel include the Navaho people, the American southwest, justice and equity, perseverance, family and friendship, belonging, loyalty, personal growth.

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## List of Skills

### Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homophones
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identifying syllables
6. Identify *personification*.
7. Identify *anagrams*
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identify/create *similes*
11. Identification of root words

### Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

### Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.
6. Complete a Story Pyramid

### Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist/antagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare characters

### Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Create a poem
4. Conduct an interview
5. Complete a KWS Chart
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Chart

### Art Activities

1. Design a cover for the novel

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## Synopsis

On a beautiful spring morning while grazing their sheep, Bright Morning and her friend Running Bird see two men coming toward them. Right away, Bright Morning knows who the men are: slavers come to the Navaho country to steal girls and sell them to families in town. In minutes, both girls are caught and taken away.

But Bright Morning does not give up trying to escape and eventually finds her way back home. What Bright Morning can't know, though, is that the entire Navaho way of life is about to change forever. [The Publisher]

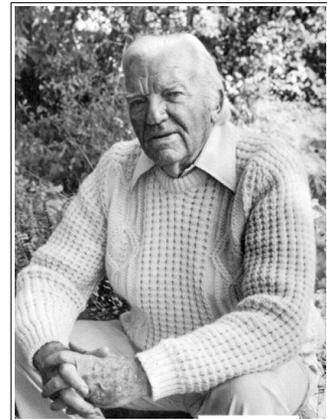
*The very simplicity of the writing, at times almost terse, makes more vivid the tragedy of the eviction and the danger and triumph of the return. ~ The Bulletin.*

## Author Biography

Scott O'Dell

**Scott O`Dell** (1898 – 1989), one of the most respected authors of historical fiction, received the Newbery Medal, three Newbery Honor Awards, and the Hans Christian Anderson Author Medal, the highest international recognition for a body of work by an author of books for young readers. His many books include ***Island of the Blue Dolphins; Black Star, Bright Dawn; Streams in the River, River to the Sea; and The Black Pearl***. He was born O`Dell Gabriel Scott in Los Angeles, but when his name appeared incorrectly on a book, he decided to keep the name Scott O`Dell. He served in the air force during World War I.

Before becoming a full-time writer he was a cameraman and technical director.



Biography adapted from the publisher (Houghton Mifflin).



# Sing Down The Moon



*By Scott O'Dell*

Name:

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# Sing Down the Moon

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## Chapters 1-2



### Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. The main character of *Sing Down the Moon* is Bright Morning, whose life is about to abruptly change in ways that she could scarcely imagine in her worst nightmare. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |



### Vocabulary:

Choose a word from the list to complete each sentence.

|        |          |         |        |
|--------|----------|---------|--------|
| mesa   | aspen    | cropped | goaded |
| league | mesquite | pasture | canyon |

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the name for small spiny trees or shrubs which are native to hot, dry regions.
2. Bright Morning's sheep \_\_\_\_\_ the grass until none was left.
3. The posse trapped the bank robbers in a deep \_\_\_\_\_ far from town.
4. A \_\_\_\_\_ is the distance of about three miles.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ trees are quite common in this area.
6. Make sure that the grass in that \_\_\_\_\_ is free of poison weeds.
7. Joanne \_\_\_\_\_ her little sister until she finally tried to ride the bicycle.
8. Running Bird and her family climbed to the top of the \_\_\_\_\_ for a picnic.

# Questions



1. What is the **setting** of the story for much of the first two chapters?

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |

2. After reading Chapters One and Two, what three **adjectives** do you think would be good choices in describing Bright Morning's personality?

|   |    |    |
|---|----|----|
| 1 | 2. | 3. |
|---|----|----|

3. Investigate: Bright Morning is a member of the **Navaho** people of the southwestern United States. Using resources in your school library or on the Internet, research three interesting facts about the Navaho and record these facts below.

|    |  |
|----|--|
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |

4. Bright Morning's sister's name was \_\_\_\_\_.

5. Why did Bright Morning think the gods had allowed her brother to have been struck by lightning?

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |

6. Why had Bright Morning left the sheep unattended?

|  |
|--|
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|  |

7. What reason did Running Bird offer for someone wanting to marry Bright Morning?

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |

# Language Activities



## A. Anagrams

An **anagram** is a word that is formed by changing the order of the letters of another word. For example, the letters in the word **WAS** can also form the word **SAW**. Follow these directions to form the anagrams:



a) read the clue in the right-hand column.

b) Using the word in the left-hand column move the letters around in any order, but you must use all the letters. All of the words in the left-hand column can be found in the first two chapters of *Sing Down the Moon*.

| Word   | Anagram | Clue                            |
|--------|---------|---------------------------------|
| struck |         | Vehicles.                       |
| last   |         | A condiment.                    |
| trail  |         | Lawsuit.                        |
| left   |         | Sensed.                         |
| aspen  |         | Window __.                      |
| spoke  |         | Prods.                          |
| rode   |         | One who accomplishes something. |

Now find two additional words from the first two chapters which have interesting anagrams to see if you can stump a classmate.

| Word | Anagram | Clue |
|------|---------|------|
|      |         |      |
|      |         |      |

## B. Even Shakespeare liked to write Quatrain Poems.

The **quatrain** is a popular form of rhymed verse. It is a poem of four lines, is usually light and can be humorous. The following famous quatrain was written by the great writer, William Shakespeare, and is taken from *Sonnet 18*.

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.*



Various rhyming schemes make up a quatrain poem. As you can see, the above four lines have a rhyming scheme of **A - B - A - B**. Other rhyming schemes include: AABB, AAAA, AABA, ABBA, ABBA, and AAAB.

Your task is to write your own quatrain poem. You may choose a rhyming scheme that fits with your own personal creation. The theme should have something to do with the themes established in the first two chapters of our novel.

### The Quatrain Poem

Now create your own Quatrain Poem. Your poem must follow the format of a quatrain poem described above (and must rhyme).

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

|  |
|--|
|  |
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**C.** A **simile** is a comparison using the words “like” or “as”. An example from Chapter One is: ... *it was a sound like the feet of warriors dancing.*



What is being compared in this example?

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
|--|--|

Invent your own **similes** comparing the following items with something from your own imagination:

a) a storm at night

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

b) the sound of a tree toad

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

c) your choice

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

## D. Exaggeration

**Exaggeration** in a literary device defined as *a statement that represents something as better or worse than it really is.* We find an example of this in Chapter Two: “*She is thin because she eats nothing,*” said Running Bird.



Think of an exaggerated way of describing the following:

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| A fast horse     |  |
| A sunset         |  |
| A leaking faucet |  |
| Your choice.     |  |

## E. 5 Ws and an H.

Choose an event from this section that you thought was really important and/or exciting. Using facts that you gleaned from reading about this event, fill in the balloons below, summarizing what you learned.



**WHO?**



**WHAT?**



**WHEN?**



**WHERE?**



**WHY?**



**HOW?**